

**The Bibliographic Expression of Eminescu's Iconography
(Photography and Fine Arts, 1939–1989)**

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Abstract

The paper intends to present synthetically the way in which the chapter of *Bibliografia Mihai Eminescu* (The Bibliography of Mihai Eminescu) entitled *Iconografia eminesciană. Mihai Eminescu oglindit în artele plastice* (Eminescu's Iconography. Mihai Eminescu in the Mirror of Fine Arts) is structured and elaborated, the recorded illustrations and references having for a source Romanian and foreign periodicals from the interval 1939–1989. This is the second part of the *Bibliography* and the 17th and last volume from the series Works (known also as the national edition, the academic edition, and most often by the name of the person who with sublime toil used to decipher Eminescu manuscripts and who edited the first six volumes – “the Perpersicius edition”). Wishing to mirror the mentioned chapter, the article surveys all its sections and subsections –, from photographic documents to exhibitions on Eminescu, going through the representations of the poet and his work (as a source of inspiration, evidently) in painting, graphic and decorative art, and sculpture –, offering only those elements which can throw at least a slight ray of light on the bibliographer's complex work. This work ranges from investigating a periodical to the identification of an artist or an artistic technique, from the simple application of some consecrated norms to one's own “view” of how the information must be communicated to those *ready* to receive it.

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There is a misconception, mainly cherished by persons not familiar with the domain, or only in occasional contact with it, that a

bibliography, be it general or special, is a simple enlisting of names, titles, and data furnished by the bibliographer maybe without any effort except copying them from one source (book, periodical, audio-video tape, CD) to another source (the bibliography itself becoming, *ipso facto*, a source of... sources). Nothing more wrong!

A special national bibliography – for we are interested, first of all, in this “type” because of its complexity – *identifies, records, orders, and processes* the informative bibliographic material at a national level in a given domain. It is, in fact, an attempt to *recovery*, which is not limited to simply recording the “visible” information, but which often requires a scientific deep delving for which the bibliographer must have a considerable range of qualities: a thorough education, professional accomplishments (among which philological knowledge should prevail irrespective of the domain dealt with), good orientation in greatly difficult situations, such as the ability to discern the information originating from sources fatally subject, more or less (un)willingly, to a certain degree of “corruption” or “distortion” (written press, the Internet), then the “science” of resorting to adequate instruments of work, and, why not, a good intuition, which, however will not be let to dominate the bibliographer, being only taken as a secondary “ally” and passenger. One could object that the bibliographer’s status, which requires only identifying and recording, does not allow him/r to interpret the data. But we are not referring to interpretation, but to the bibliographer’s non-mechanical, intelligent participation in the arrangement of the bibliographic material. Otherwise, the bibliographer need not correct the erroneous names and data, need not identify pseudonyms and years of publications, need not establish certain correspondences between complementary references (such as “see also”), etc.

The process has mainly three distinct phases, namely: 1. the identification of the material through a method which has become specific due to its “traditionalism” (search, in occurrence, to which alternative, complementary sources, such as the Internet, are added); 2. the elaboration of the analytic bibliography on the basis of a coherent structural plan; 3. the division and structuring of the material in thematic chapters, in which the particularizing role is played mainly by *annotation*, an element meant to express, concisely and definition like, the content of a book, article, essay, etc.

A bibliography has, despite its complexity, an informative role, not being meant to be a substitute for the direct reading of the sources recorded in it by those interested in a certain topic. It is, however,

probable that, by the novelty of some information offered to researchers, the bibliography would offer new research directions, some of its segments opening other ways of approach and investigation to a certain literary, historic, scientific, etc. phenomenon.

Such an instrument is *Bibliografia Mihai Eminescu. Viața – Opera. Referințe* (The Bibliography of Mihai Eminescu. Life – Work. References) (vol. 17th of the series Works, better known under the title “Perpessicius edition”). Its first part, covering the period 1866–1938 was published in 1999. The second part (1939–1989) was published in 2008. We must, however, mention that this work undertook to discover and record all the contributions regarding Mihai Eminescu, both those published in Romania and those written by scholars all over the world.

To illustrate the effort specific to bibliographic activity, in case of a bibliography dedicated to a personage of Mihai Eminescu’s greatness, we choose to present *synthetically* the working methods in and the results obtained by conceiving and elaborating one of the final chapters of the work: *Iconografia eminesciană* (Eminescu’s Iconography).¹

A poet on whom the entire universe seems to have showered its inspirational energies, Mihai Eminescu constituted as a man and artist a more or less fortunate source of inspiration for an entire army of scholars, writers, plastic artists, and composers, attracted as a moth to the flame by the brightness of his unparalleled genius. Among these a few have shown congeniality publishing works worthy both of themselves and mainly of Eminescu. If several of these communications were a sincere homage brought, according to each person’s abilities, to a work which is a stronghold of Romanian culture, in others, the inevitable reverence could not entirely mask the author’s wish to share, even for a sort time, in the glory of Eminescu’s genius.

The first section of the chapter – 90 A4 pages, 1079 bibliographic entries – dedicated to Eminescu’s iconography focuses on *The Poet’s Photographs*, the four authentic photographs, which fixed, in the course of time, making it to transcend the time, the avatars of a face which many of us would have preferred to remain immaterial and

¹ From now on, we refer in brackets to bibliographic entries, on the one hand supporting our statements, on the other hand inviting explicitly the users to verify themselves, once they get the book, the truth of our evidence. We are aware that our work can be perfected; therefore we welcome any correction or suggestion which will prove pertinent from a logical and methodological point of view.

atemporal, therefore unalterable, assimilable to the astral image of the 19 years old poet.

The four well-known photographs representing Eminescu, we only mentioned those articles in the subchapter referred to in which the authors give their opinions regarding their history or signification, as well as the polemics caused by the appearance of some iconographic documents liable to represent the poet. In the work, if an authentic photograph of the poet (abbreviated: **F. 1**, **F. 2**, **F. 3**, and **F. 4**), or other *photographic* image related to him is reproduced, this is mentioned on the right of the title it accompanies (edition, article, translation, etc.). This applies also for some of the plastic art works (graphic art, painting, sculpture, etc.) inspired by Eminescu's face, life, and work, the presence of which was signalled in the bibliography.

For the period 1939–1989 no interminable lists, such as those of in the first part of the 17th volume of the Works, were elaborated containing the abbreviated titles of the periodicals and books which had published the authentic photographs of the poet.

To Eminescu's photograph (marked: **A–D**) all the faces dear to him who defined, define, and will define his earthly existence are added –according to the materials furnished by the consulted periodicals – in the second section of the chapter entitled *Photographs of the Poet's Family*: his parents, Gheorghe and Raluca Eminovici (**G**); their grave (**H**); the poet's brothers and sisters (only three of them in this case), Aglaia (**I**), Harieta (**J**), Matei (**K**); and finally the unavoidable Muse, though not an *expressis verbis* relation, Veronica Micle (**L**). The third section is *Places Related to the Poet's Life*: Ipotești, the village of his childhood (**M**); his parents' house in Ipotești (**N**); the lake in Ipotești (**O**), eternalized in the poem *Lacul* (The Lake) in the opinion of some literary historians, preferring prosaic certitudes; the linden tree of Copou (**P**); other sites in Iași, Suceava, and Botoșani, witnesses of the poet's visits to these towns (**Q**); Bucharest in the years when he worked there as an editor and journalist and was at the height of his creative powers (**R**); the halt in Prague, especially the house in Lipova Street (**S**); Vienna in the years of his studies, his four lodgings, and also the painful interlude in Ober-Döbling (**Š**); and, finally, the end of his earthly road in Bellu Cemetery (**T**).

The exclamation "sic!" I slipped into the last two titles of the **N** section (entry **22858**) is meant to draw attention to a completely unacceptable error related to the image's year of publication: 1989. At that time it had already been known for a long time that the poet was born

in Botoșani and not in Ipotești, therefore to name his parents' house the place of his birth was totally erroneous from a historical-biographical point of view, and revealed at least intellectual laziness, if not flagrant ignorance.

We have deliberately omitted the sections corresponding to letters **E** and **F**, in order to make our former order of ideas thematically coherent.

Section **F**, enumerating the newspapers and reviews which have reproduced the poet's signature, is not problematic – maybe with the exception of the interesting hypothesis launched by Traian Marcu in the article: *Autografe din anii 1868–1869* (Autographs from 1868–1869) (entry **22848**).

Section **E** – one of the most exciting sections in our opinion – deals with *apocryphal* photographs [4 photographs, though, at a certain point, the fake *Eminescu la Mănăstirea Nemțului* (Eminescu at Neamț Monastery), published by Octav Minar, is also mentioned]. The “divine critic”, George Călinescu himself tried to grant authenticity to the first image included in section **E**, *Eminescu la 16 ani* (Eminescu at 16), with his authority not without vehemence. Despite the undeniable counterarguments regarding the identity of the person represented in the image, Călinescu included it with a stubbornness characteristic to him in the first editions of his monographic work, *Viața lui Eminescu* (The Life of Eminescu).

The bibliographic work, as we understood it, evidently within the limits of the generally accepted specific norms, resulted in situations when we relived real “pen strives” caused by the photograph which appeared in the literary review entitled *Ramuri* (Branches) in 1968 (entry **22842**), as well as the one published in the review *Manuscriptum* in 1975 (entry **22843**). If, in the second case, the face of the represented person shows some similarity to the poet – beyond the hunting suit not at all reflecting Eminescu's “spirit” –, the polemics caused by the photograph published in *Ramuri* seemed to be much ado about nothing. All the participants of the debate – between them Șerban Cioculescu, Emil Manu and Mihai Ciurdariu –, expressing their opinion pros and cons, seem to have fallen suddenly victim to a real *trou de mémoire*, forgetting (!) to confront the photograph in question, dated to 1878, with the one made in the same year by Franz Duschek for the board containing the photographs of *Junimea* members. From the point of view of typology, physiognomy, or anthropology there is no trace of resemblance between the 28 old poet, emanating a mature manliness (even if against the

background of a markedly sceptical expression), and the approximately 18–20 year old youth, with a rather inelegant, prominent jaw, with hardly visible moustache, but with a high forehead similar to the poet's, which accounts for some people's enthusiasm with respect to the idea that a new Eminescu image was discovered. We shall not repeat what is already recorded clearly and concisely in the bibliographic entries, we shall only state that contrary to the alleged Eminescu in hunting suit published in *Manuscriptum*, whose real identity has been discovered, the identity of the person in the review *Ramuri* is till a mystery.

The bibliographic particularity of this section consists of the fact that the articles of those participating in the dispute are added in a chronological order to the entry where the debated photograph is. A compact bibliography was preferred, without any space between the articles, in order to offer a unitary image, without a respite, which would give back somewhat the rhythm of the animated polemics.

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The interpretation of the great poet's face and works by fine arts can be followed in the following section: *Portraits (paintings, graphic art representations, decorative art)*; *Portraits* (with unknown authors); *Illustrations and Works of Plastic Arts Inspired by the Face, Life, and Work of the Poet* (alphabetically, according to authors); *Other Works* (with unknown authors); *Mihai Eminescu in Romanian Sculpture (Heads, Busts, Statues, Monuments)* (alphabetically, according to authors).

The first and most important note of the bibliographic description refers, of course, to the photograph which inspired a certain portrait (when the resulting "work", even if in great lines only, preserved some features of the "model"). The second specification referred – according to the elements of identification we had – to the complexity of the artistic approach (drawing, engraving, aquarelle, painting), as well as the technique adopted by the author (ink, charcoal, in wood or on wood, oil, tempera, etc.), these two aspects going, up to a certain point, "hand in hand". The note "reproduced in", which follows the first publication (this recorded by us in each case), refers, evidently to the later republications of the work, while the note "see also" reviews the references which reconstruct the creation of a work with a more special genesis, such as: the charcoal portrait made by Ștefan Luchian as a student in Munich (1890) (entry **22905**) or the ink portrait by George Bacovia (dated to

November 21, 1900) (entry **22877**), the creation of which was related by the author's wife, Agatha Grigorescu-Bacovia. The note "see also" refers, in several cases, to the reproduction of the work too, since any article speaking about a work and its author is accompanied, automatically, by the image in question.

Among the numerous artists who, as if wishing to compete with the "original", dedicated *portraits* to Mihai Eminescu, there are some with a solid reputation: Corneliu Baba, Sabin Bălașa, Aurel Bordenache, Traian Brădean, Eugen Drăguțescu, Dan Hatmanu, Ligia Macovei, François Pamfil, Camil Ressu, Mircea Spătaru, Elena Uță Chelaru, Spiru Vergulescu, Ion Vlad, Miha Vulcănescu. Many of them are also present in the section recording the *Illustrations and Works of Plastic Arts Inspired by the Face, Life, and Work of Mihai Eminescu*. Maybe it is not quite surprising the presence of Nichita Stănescu, the prince of contemporary Romanian poetry, among Eminescu's portraitists, his delight in this art being well known. A "loyal" rival of Stănescu is Marin Sorescu, belonging to the same generation: he created some illustrations inspired by Eminescu's poetry.

It is evident that each work of the artists who dedicated one or several portraits to Eminescu was recorded, specifying the technique where it was necessary (e.g. in the case of Ligia Macovei who immortalized the poet in drawing, aquarelle, and painting – see entries **22908–22910**). We have another example in the person of the painter Solomon Sanielevici (entries **22938–22939**), present with a drawing published in *Vatra* magazine in Craiova (1939), as well as with a coloured portrait reproduced on the main cover of the review *Manuscriptum* (no. 2/1987). We have thought we ought to mention in a note the voluminous article by Gheorghe Cunesco – *Un pictor fascinat de poet* (A Painter Fascinated by the Poet) – referring to the life and work of Solomon Sanielevici, published in the same issue of the same review, pages 38–43, in order to help those who are not content with only contemplating an image, even of Eminescu, but wish to find out more about the artist who was irrepressibly fascinated by the poet's face so that he took the risks of a personal interpretation of the subject. It seemed useful to mention, especially in these two subchapters, and mainly in the case of plastic techniques based on polychromatism whether the reproduction is coloured or black-and-white.

As we have mentioned above, we kept, according to the data offered by the publication we used, the elements which connect a work to a certain cultural-historical context: being exhibited (see entries **22903**,

22923, 22941), being placed in a public institution (entry **22915**), or marking an important data in the history of Eminescu portraits [entry **22934**, the article entitled: *Unul dintre primele portrete* (One of the First Portraits), referring to the one made by the painter Nicolae Rădulescu for *Revista olteană* in 1889].

In the case of the *Portraits with Unknown Author*, the lack of the name does not exclude the possibility of identifying the author, though, in most cases, these are editorial sketches made a long time ago, even as far as the end of the 19th century (see entries **22964, 22968**). We have tried to compensate for the lack of the name by mentioning, as before, the starting point (namely one of the four photographs), describing the portrait “from a feature” (entry **22967**), mentioning the place where it is exhibited (entry **22969**), or the collection to which it belonged at the time when it was published (entry **22974**).

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In the section entitled *Illustrations and Works of Plastic Arts Inspired by the Face, Life, and Work of the Poet* all the genres and techniques are represented (in alphabetic order according to authors). They have been recorded, therefore, according to the information offered by the publication which reproduced a certain work. The works by prolific artists, such as Aurel Bordenache, Traian Brădean (entry **22998**) or Ligia Macovei (entry **23057**) were collected under the general title *Illustrations by... to the Work of...*, in order to give a more unified view on their work as Eminescu illustrators. We have chosen, in general, a flexible approach within the limits of bibliographic accuracy, the works being recorded either according to the above presented formula, or title by title according to the information obtained from the perusal of the periodicals. Checking several times the materials in the stocks led to the most edifying observations, according to the principle that “nothing is what it seems to be”. Namely, you cannot identify a work only on inspiration, intuition, or based on an aleatory typological supposition without ascertaining that it is really the work in question. Research in the stacks helped us to attribute/re-attribute works to certain authors, to discover the plastic art or photography techniques works of art were made by, and to place a work in one or several (sub)sections of the chapter *Iconografia eminesciană* as adequately as possible.

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One of the most complex and difficult sections of the chapter was the one entitled *Eminescu in Romanian Sculpture (Heads, Busts, Statues...)*. The difficulty consisted mainly of the correct classification of the sculptures made by the same author, avoiding, as far as possible, the “mixing up” of heads with bust and of completed statues (monuments) with the preliminary projects, or with the ones which were never realized.

We considered important, here more than anywhere else, to put the sculptor’s name into the headword, irrespective of the fact if s/he is present with one piece of information, with ten or with even more. As in the case of great sculptors, the authors of some monuments which have become well known to the public, (e.g. Gheorghe D. Anghel and the statue before the Romanian Athenaeum, Oscar Han and the group in Constanța), or in the case of some monument projects which caused fiery debates (see the case of Constantin Baraschi, entries **23172–23173**), we grouped all the references in a compact series, subordinated to a single entry, meant to account for the genesis of the work from sketch stage to the unveiling. In order to identify a certain work correctly and to group the information around a nucleus, we compared the reproductions from the periodicals we used with the illustrations and chronological tables published in the monographs dedicated to the sculptors in question (we refer, naturally, to famous artists, such as Gheorghe D. Anghel, Oscar Han, Ion Vlad, Ion Vlasui, and others).

The repeated contact with Eminescu’s bibliography in all its forms offered us in more than one occasion the satisfaction of being able to recognize and correct the misattribution of some works. For the present section the concrete examples are to be found in entries **23183**, **23212**, **23296** where we established the true author of some misattributed sculptures (Mihai Coșan instead of Gheorghe D. Anghel, Ion Vlad instead of Ion Vlasui, and Oscar Han instead of Gheorghe D. Anghel).

In the section *Heads, Busts, Statues* (with unknown authors) of the present chapter, we succeeded in identifying the author in approximately one third of the cases; this fact we recorded, according to the bibliographic practice, in right square brackets.

The last two sections – *Works of Plastic Arts Presented in Exhibitions (Galleries, Salons, Museums)*, *Exhibitions Related to Eminescu*, and *Articles on Eminescu and His Work as Reflected by Plastic Arts* – were dictated by particular situations. The first section contains references to works of plastic arts unaccompanied by image

reproductions, only the text in question proving the existence of them, especially as the “trace” of the oldest ones can hardly be discovered today. The last section contains synthetic articles dedicated to the reflection of the poet and his work in plastic arts, general observations and evaluations, mentions referring to the existence of works inspired by Eminescu, observations regarding the state or the fate of a work of art connected with Eminescu (see the three references to the “drama” of the bust destroyed by the Soviet army after their occupation of Cernăuți, entries **23426-23427, 23431**) etc.

Not excluding the possibility that other works inspired by Eminescu and his work might exist from the investigated period, we may justly state that the present work is one of the most complex and complete bibliographic works on the poet’s iconography.

Translated by Ágnes Korondi